

# **Peace Officers Murdered in California - 1992**

by

**Charles B. Moorman & George T. Williams**

## **Introduction**

Peace Officers in California during 1992 suffered the murders of seven of their peers during the performance of their official duties. All died as a result of gunshot wounds from direct actions of suspects. Only felonious homicides were considered in this study. Accidental deaths of officers are not within the scope of this article. The murdered officers represented municipal police, county sheriff's departments and the California Highway Patrol.

The data presented in this article has been obtained through interviews of homicide investigators shortly after the murders. The authors would like to take this opportunity to thank those investigators and their administrators for cooperating in releasing the information contained in this article.

This article is offered to the law enforcement community to increase the level of safety and tactical awareness of individual officers while performing their hazardous profession of enforcing the law and providing service to the public. It is intended the information presented in this article will be used by officer safety trainers and individual officers to assist in adjusting tactical training and skills to reflect the trends and changes in suspect behavior which represent a threat to the health of officers.

## **Tabulated Information**

Table 1 lists in column form twenty-one factors dealing with each incident in which officers was murdered. These factors include the date, time and date of the murder, agency the victim was employed by and the initiating call or incident. A footnote (\*) indicates whether or not the officers were wearing body armor at the time of the murder. Additional peace officer factors listed are age, race, total number of years of law enforcement experience, rank, assignment and total number of officers on scene at time of the murder. Suspects information is listed on their age, race and if the suspect was killed (\*\* K) or committed suicide (\*\* S). Data is listed on the type and caliber of the weapon used in the murder, distance between officer and suspect at the time of the killing wound and the location of the officer's fatal injury. A footnote (#) denotes those officers who were struck with only one gunshot.

In 1992 seven officers were murdered in California in six separate incidents. The murders of the officers were spaced throughout the year (Chart #1). One murder occurred in March, two in May, one in July, one in August and two officers were murdered in a single incident in December.

Chart #2 shows the murders by day of the week in which they occurred. Three murders (two incidents) took place on Mondays and one each on Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

Considering the murders by time of day, Chart #3 shows 57% of the murdered officers (four) were murdered during hours normally considered to be during

daylight hours (0600-1759) while three victims were killed during hours of darkness (1800-0559).

Table 1 lists by type of agency four officers (57%) represented municipal police departments, two victims (29%) were from Los Angeles Sheriff's Department and one officer was from the California Highway Patrol. All of the officers were murdered in urban settings. A footnote (\*) lists three of five on-duty officers wearing ballistic body armor at the time of their deaths. Two victim officers were off-duty at the time of their deaths and not wearing armor vests.

The incidents resulting in the officers' murders were varied. A Los Angeles County Deputy Sheriff responded to a man-with-a-call gun in late March, and was shot to death by a highly trained El Salvadoran who unexpectedly fired his revolver while exiting from a building, continuing to move, reload and shoot as he kept backup deputies heads down while making good his escape. The suspect was shot to death several days later in New York State by the State Police. A narcotics warrant service by Los Angeles County Sheriff's Deputies in May turned tragic when a deputy was shot and killed by a suspect armed with a .22 caliber rifle in a mobile home. Maywood Police Department lost a veteran officer as he was exiting his patrol vehicle when he responded to a silent burglary alarm, was suddenly rushed by a suspect and shot to death. In July an off-duty California Highway Patrol Officer was shot to death by a motorist as the officer intervened in a traffic dispute. In August an off-duty Los Angeles Police Officer contacted by a neighbor concerned about a prowler was shot to death. Three days after Christmas three Richmond Police Officers responded to a family disturbance which was actually a family hostage situation by a husband armed with a semi-automatic rifle. Two of the officers were shot to death by the suspect who then committed suicide.

The average age of the victims is 35.6 years (Chart #4). The age of the officers in five-year increments were: two 26-30 years; three 31-35 years; and two officers were over 45 years of age (47 and 51 years). If the two oldest victims ages are factored out the other five victims averaged 30.2 years of age.

Chart #5 lists the average law enforcement experience of the officers as 9.7 years which can be misleading. When the two officers with 19 years of experience are factored out the average is reduced to six years of law enforcement experience. The experience of the victims by five-year increments is: one 1-5 years; four 6-10 years; and two 16-20 years.

Chart #6 lists ethnic representation of the slain officers: four Caucasians (57%); two Hispanics (29%); and one (Asian 14%) . All of the murdered officers were males.

By type of assignment at time of the murder, two of the officers (29%) were in off-duty status but acting within the scope of their police duties (Table 1). Four of the five on-duty victims were assigned to patrol duty and one officer was part of a narcotics enforcement team during a search warrant service. All of the murdered peace officers held the rank of either deputy or officer.

Table 1 lists the categories of activity accounting for the seven murders. Two incidents were suspicious person or vehicle circumstances and two officers were killed in a single incident of a family disturbance. Other single murder incidents were initiated by man-with-a-gun, narcotics search warrant and a silent burglary alarm.

Additional officers were at the scene in three of the six incidents (Table 1). Back up available to the officers ranged from one officer up to between six to

nine in the case of the narcotics search warrant service incident. If the off-duty murder incidents are factored out back up was available to officers in three of four incidents (75%).

All but one of the seven murders were cleared. The suspect in the murder of the off-duty California Highway Patrol officer is outstanding and was reported to be 36-40 years of age. Chart #7 lists the ages of the known five male suspects in five-year increments: one 21-25 years; two 36-40 years; and two 51-55 years. The average age of the known suspects was 39.2 years. The single suspects in the two incidents of man-with-a-gun and the narcotics search warrant service were killed by law enforcement officers (33%). Two suspects were arrested, one in the silent burglary alarm incident and one of the off-duty incidents. One suspect in the other off-duty incident is outstanding at the time of this writing.

Suspect ethnicity was four Hispanics (including the outstanding suspect), one Caucasian and one Asian (Chart #8). The Asian suspect committed the double homicide and also committed suicide at the murder scene.

The firearms used to murder the officers were extremely varied encompassing handguns, rifles and a shotgun (Chart #9). Two of the murders (29%) were committed with 9mm handguns, two with a .30 caliber carbine (double homicide) and one murder each with a .357 revolver, .22 caliber rifle and a shotgun (Chart #10). Only the .30 caliber carbine defeated the officer's armor which was not designed to contain that type of round.

Chart #11 lists the distances involved in the killing of the officers. In none of the murders were the victim officer and suspect farther than fifteen feet apart. In five-foot increments the distances were: one 0-5 feet; four 6-10; and two at

11-15 feet (29%). The two victims in the two off-duty incidents were struck by a single shot fired in each incident at 6-10 feet.

Chart #12 lists the location of fatal wound as the torso in four of the murders (57%). The other three victims were shot in the head-one of these was shot in the neck. Body armor was not a factor in two on-duty murders because the fatal wound was to the head. Each of the two off-duty victims were struck by the round from a single shot fired to the front upper torso.

### **Conclusions:**

1. There is no particularly hazardous or safe time of the day, week or month. While each of the murders occurred in what would be described as an urban setting, no part of the State should be considered "safe" for law enforcement. While there are times officers are employed in a dangerous profession it may be more accurate to describe it as a "hazardous" profession. Officers were killed almost as often during hours of darkness as during hours of light, dictating a need for night range and dark range tactical firearms training.
2. Physical fitness is important! The average age of the murdered officers was 35.6 years. As officers get older the effects of constantly changing diet, poor sleep, stress, extended duty hours and shift rotation take an increasing toll. By maintaining basic physical and mental fitness levels the officer will delay the slowing down of reflexes, maintain upper body strength, endurance and lessen the effects of adrenaline.
3. Off-duty killings of officers increased in 1992 and continue to require training attention. One third of the incidents this year occurred when off-duty

officers took enforcement action. It should be noted that one of the off-duty incidents was officer initiated. Off-duty officers have severe limitations on their options in the use of force. These officers normally do not carry chemical agents, electrical weapons and impact weapons in addition to their off-duty firearm. Other considerations must include lack of available back up, lack of communication and lack of immediate recognition as a peace officer. Unless there is an immediate life-threatening or violent situation where the officer must act, within legal perimeters perhaps peace officers should be counseled to be the best witnesses possible and refrain from engaging in enforcement action when off-duty.

4. The wearing of a ballistic vest cannot be too highly emphasized! Three officers died as a result of head or neck wounds and two were off duty with no body armor requirement. One of the officers killed by wounds to the torso was killed by a rifle round the vest was not designed to contain. One officer was murdered who was wearing a vest and took a round in the front lower torso below the vest. With the media reporting the number of officers being fired upon increasing over previous years, one of the factors which must be credited with the relative low numbers of officers murdered is the wearing of ballistic armor. Officers should be encouraged to wear their vest through training and Department Policy.

5. Most on-duty murdered officers were assigned to patrol. The remaining on-duty peace officer was involved in narcotics enforcement. This is consistent with previous years showing these assignments to be the most dangerous for officers, probably as a result of their high visibility and first responder status. There is no routine call that can be considered safe as demonstrated by the variety of initiating circumstances leading to these murders. Officers should

take a strong tactical approach to their jobs. If an officer is being tactical that officer is mentally alert.

6. This year saw a radical departure from past years regarding the suspects ages. Normally officers are murdered by suspects who are much younger on the average than themselves. Nineteen ninety-two saw the average age of suspects rise to almost four years older than the average age of the victim officers. Officers must be cautioned not to relax because of the relative age of the suspect. Strong officer safety practices must be followed when dealing with any suspect during an enforcement contact.

7. Race and ethnicity is no sure indicator of danger, although in 1992 Hispanic suspects were over-represented in the data. As our society incorporates more people from other countries, cultural awareness training as to family traditions, experience with violence, body language and other cultural customs, which may be quite different from American culture must be provided to our law enforcement officers. Two suspects, one Hispanic and one Asian, had foreign military training and tactical operations experience.

8. This year the murder firearms were varied with no real preponderance of weapon or caliber types. While all of the murders were by firearms, the so called assault weapons or full-automatic weapons portrayed by the media and others in over-all murders failed to materialize in the murders of peace officers. A revolver, two semi-automatic handguns, small caliber rifle, a medium caliber semi-automatic rifle and a shotgun of unknown gauge were used to murder the seven officers. Officers must be made aware of the penetrative abilities of rifle ammunition and the potential of their use in homes and vehicles.



9. Training must center on the tactical application of accepted officer safety practices (cover and concealment, position of advantage, communications, coordination, evaluation of the circumstances, etc.)! The fact that two of the officers murdered this year were struck with the only round fired in two incidents indicates situations sometimes develop so quickly officers cannot react once they are committed to a course of action. Be aware of and maintain tactical options.

### **Summary**

During this era of fiscal reductions and the decrease in training budgets administrators must, by word and deed, reinforce their officers safety practices. Individual officers and supervisors must take responsibility for their continuing officer safety approach to their job. This includes a "Tactical Attitude" and mental alertness to danger signals. This attitude should include independent study of officer safety issues, publications, critiques of response calls with other officers, attending tactics related courses in their off-duty time and the practicing of skills which may preserve their safety in the field. Increasingly it is up to the individual to train. The life the officer saves will probably be his or her own!

**Table 1**

**PEACE OFFICERS MURDERED IN CALIFORNIA - 1992**

| Day/Date & Time              | Agency                           | Victim *                                 | Type of Incident             | Victim Age/LE Exp Rank/Race | Victim Assignment | Add. Off's at Scene | Sus. ** Age/Race | Murder Weapon *** Type/Cal. Distance | Location of # Fatal Wound              |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|------------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| Sun. - Mar.29<br>2010 Hrs.   | Los Angeles<br>SD                | Nelson *<br>Yamamoto                     | Man-With-Gun                 | 26/3<br>Dep./A              | Uniform           | 2                   | 36 ** K<br>H     | Rev./ .357<br>11-15'                 | Front<br>Lower Torso                   |
| Mon. - May 11<br>0930 Hrs.   | Los Angeles<br>SD                | Richard<br>Hammack                       | Narcotics<br>Search Warr.    | 31/7<br>Dep./C              | Plain-<br>clothes | 6-9                 | 37 **K<br>C      | Rifle/.22<br>6-10'                   | Head                                   |
| Fri. - May 29<br>1344 Hrs.   | Maywood<br>PD                    | John<br>Hoglund                          | Silent Burglar<br>Alarm-Mkt  | 47/19<br>Off./C             | Uniform           | 0                   | 21<br>H          | Semi-Auto/9mm<br>11-15'              | Head                                   |
| Thur. - July 23<br>2040 Hrs. | Cal. Hwy. Patrol<br>(Central LA) | Fidel<br>Aleman                          | Suspicious<br>Vehicle        | 33/7<br>Off./H              | Off-Duty          | 0                   | 35-40 (?)<br>H   | Shotgun<br>6-10'                     | Front #<br>Upper Torso                 |
| Sat. - Aug. 22<br>2355 Hrs.  | Los Angeles<br>PD                | Edward<br>Kislo                          | Suspicious<br>Person         | 51/19<br>Off./C             | Off-Duty          | 0                   | 51<br>H          | Semi-Auto./9mm<br>6-10'              | Front #<br>Upper Torso                 |
| Mon. - Dec. 28<br>0616 Hrs.  | Richmond<br>PD                   | David *<br>Haynes<br>Leonard *<br>Garcia | Disturbance<br>Family - Res. | 30/7/Off./C<br>31/6/Off./H  | Uniform<br>(Both) | 1                   | 51 ** S<br>A     | Rifle-Carbine/.30<br>6-10' / 0-5'    | Side of Neck /<br>Front Upper<br>Torso |

**PEACE OFFICERS MURDERED IN 1992 = 7**

- \* = Victim Wearing Body Armor - 3
- \*\* = Suspect Killed (K) or Committed Suicide (S) - 3
- \*\*\* = Victim's Weapon/Equipment Was the Murder Weapon - 0
- # = Victim Struck With Only One Gunshot Wound - 2

**RACE**

- C = Caucasian
- H = Hispanic
- A = Asian

**#1. Peace Officer Murders By Month of Year**

| Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 0   | 0   | 1   | 0   | 2   | 0   | 1   | 1   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 2   |

**#2. Peace Officer Murders By Day of Week**

| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thur | Fri | Sat |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|-----|-----|
| 1   | 3   | 0   | 0   | 1    | 1   | 1   |

**#3. Peace Officer Murders In Hour of Time**

| Day   | 0600 | 0700 | 0800 | 0900 | 1000 | 1100 | 1200 | 1300 | 1400 | 1500 | 1600 | 1700 |
|-------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| (4)   | 2 *  | 0    | 0    | 1    | 0    | 0    | 0    | 1    | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0    |
| Night | 1800 | 1900 | 2000 | 2100 | 2200 | 2300 | 0000 | 0100 | 0200 | 0300 | 0400 | 0500 |
| (3)   | 0    | 0    | 2    | 0    | 0    | 1    | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0    |

\* One Incident-Double Homicide

**#4. Peace Officer Murders By Victim's Age**

| <b>Years of Age</b>      | <b>21-25</b> | <b>26-30</b> | <b>31-35</b> | <b>36-40</b> | <b>41-45</b> | <b>45-Plus *</b> |
|--------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|------------------|
| <b>Number of Victims</b> | 0            | 2            | 3            | 0            | 0            | 2                |

\* Ages 47 and 51 Years      Average Age of Seven Victims = 35.6 Years

**#5. Officer Murder Victim's Years of Law Enforcement Experience**

| <b>Years of Experience</b> | <b>1-5</b> | <b>6-10</b> | <b>11-15</b> | <b>16-20</b> |
|----------------------------|------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|
| <b>Number of Victims</b>   | 1          | 4           | 0            | 2            |

Average Years of Law Enforcement Experience = 9.7 Years

**#6. Murdered Officer's Race**

| <b>Race</b>              | <b>Caucasian</b> | <b>Hispanic</b> | <b>Asian</b> |
|--------------------------|------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| <b>Number of Victims</b> | 4                | 2               | 1            |

**#7. Peace Officer Murder Suspects By Age**

| Years of Age       | 20-25 | 26-30 | 31-35 | 36-40           | 41-Plus *      |
|--------------------|-------|-------|-------|-----------------|----------------|
| Number of Suspects | 1     | 0     | 0     | 3 <sup>KK</sup> | 2 <sup>S</sup> |

\* Two Suspects Ages 51 Years      Average Age of 5 Known Suspects = 39.2 Years  
 K = Two Suspects Killed By Police  
 S = One Suspect Committed Suicide

**#8. Murder Suspect's Race**

| Race               | Caucasian | Hispanic | Asian * |
|--------------------|-----------|----------|---------|
| Number of Suspects | 1         | 4        | 1       |

\* One Suspect Murdered Two Police Officers

**#9. Type of Weapon Used to Murder Officers**

| Weapon            | Handgun  |        | Shoulder Arm |         |
|-------------------|----------|--------|--------------|---------|
|                   | Revolver | Pistol | Rifle        | Shotgun |
| Number of Victims | 1        | 2      | 3            | 1       |

**#10. Caliber of Murder Weapon**

|                          |            |              |             |             |                |
|--------------------------|------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|
| <b>Weapon</b>            | <b>.22</b> | <b>.30 *</b> | <b>.357</b> | <b>9mm</b>  | <b>Shotgun</b> |
| <b>Number of Victims</b> | <b>1 R</b> | <b>2 RR</b>  | <b>1 H</b>  | <b>2 HH</b> | <b>1 U</b>     |

\* = Double Homicide  
 R = Rifle  
 H = Handgun  
 U = Gauge Not Identified

**#11. Peace Officer Murders-Distance from Suspect**

|                          |            |               |              |
|--------------------------|------------|---------------|--------------|
| <b>Distance In Feet</b>  | <b>0-5</b> | <b>6-10 *</b> | <b>11-15</b> |
| <b>Number of Victims</b> | <b>1</b>   | <b>4</b>      | <b>2</b>     |

\* Two Victims Struck With Only One Shot, Each

**#12. Location of Fatal Wound**

|                          |             |             |                    |              |
|--------------------------|-------------|-------------|--------------------|--------------|
| <b>Location</b>          | <b>Head</b> | <b>Neck</b> | <b>Front Torso</b> |              |
|                          |             |             | <b>Upper</b>       | <b>Lower</b> |
| <b>Number of Victims</b> | <b>2</b>    | <b>1</b>    | <b>3 *</b>         | <b>1</b>     |

\* Two Victims Struck With Only One Shot, Each

**Charles B. Moorman** has served California law enforcement over 30 years with the Fullerton Police Department, California Highway Patrol and the California Specialized Training Institute (CSTI) at San Luis Obispo. He has been the Chief of the resident Emergency Management and Criminal Justice Programs at CSTI since 1984. He earned Master's Degrees in Police Administration and Education from the California State Universities at Los Angeles and San Luis Obispo. Mr. Moorman holds several California Community Colleges Life Teaching Credentials and the Chief Administrative Officer Credential. He is a Life Member of the California Peace Officers Association. The Author has provided file review and expert witness court testimony for law enforcement agencies in the areas of training, use of force and tactics.

**George T. Williams** is the Lead, and Primary Instructor for the Officer Safety & Field Tactics courses at the California Specialized Training Institute in San Luis Obispo, California since 1987. He holds the rank of 5th dan, Tang Soo Do, and is the developer of the Williams Defense Systems for the Police Professional. He has provided training to over 7,500 peace officers of all ranks in the last fifteen years in the areas of Close Defense, Arrest & Control, Employment of Firearms, SWAT Warrant Service Skills, Building Search, and Vehicle Stops. He is widely sought after as a trainer of police, including SWAT and Narcotics Teams. Mr. Williams has authored over twenty eight articles for several national publications on topics ranging from Police Tactics, Firearms, Martial Arts, SWAT Tactics, and Defensive Tactics, and has successfully provided file review and Expert Testimony in both criminal and civil litigation in many instances.